

## **WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: COUNTY CLERK - MOTOR VEHICLES (INCLUDING HISTORIAN)**

**DATE: MAY 28, 2009**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS	KENNY	PAMELA VOGEL, COUNTY CLERK
	BELDEN	JODY ROSS, DEPUTY COUNTY CLERK
	STRAINER	FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
	PITKIN	HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES

**COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:** JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES  
SUPERVISOR SHEEHAN  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISOR GIRARD  
SUPERVISOR BENTLEY  
SUPERVISOR GOODSPEED  
SUPERVISOR MERLINO  
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the County Clerk-Motor Vehicles Committee to order at 9:35 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2009 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Pamela Vogel, County Clerk, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Mrs. Vogel requested permission to attend the New York State County Clerk Records Management Meeting to be held June 8 - 10, 2009, in Alexandria Bay, NY, at a cost of \$150 per night for a two night stay, which included accommodations, registration and meals. As a result of a GSA inquiry, Mrs. Vogel noted that neither Lake George nor Alexandria Bay, which were primary destinations in New York State, were recognized by the system.

Motion was made by Mr. Pitkin, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to approve the request for travel as outlined above. *A copy of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Convention is on file with the minutes.*

Next, Mrs. Vogel presented a request for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$215 from code A.1665 220 - Office Equipment, to code A.1665 210 - Office Furniture, to balance the account.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Pitkin and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds as outlined above, and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the Request for Transfer of Funds is on file with the minutes.*

Responding to a question from Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, Mrs. Vogel stated that equipment had not been purchased at this time. Mr. Payne announced that there was a hold on all purchase orders and he apprised that the cash flow for the month of July was projected to drop to \$150,000 leaving no funds available for purchases. Mr. Payne requested that he be contacted prior to the completion of any purchase orders.

Regarding Budget Performance, Mrs. Vogel reviewed the Budget Performance report which was distributed with the agenda. She reported that the 2008 appropriation expenditures were 94% of the budgeted amount for County Clerk and 100% for Public Records, and those same budgets were at 39% and 44% respectively for 2009 (through the first week of May 2009), which, she said, included encumbrances for larger items. Mr. Pitkin inquired of the strategy used to maintain such a significant improvement in the Department and Mrs. Vogel stated that her office had consistently remained vigilant at trying to maintain a conservative Budget.

Mrs. Vogel reported that salaries were at 31% to date for 2009. In terms of revenue, she stated that clerk fees were at 31% for the period from January through April and included fees from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Mrs. Vogel forecasted the deposit for May 2009 to be approximately \$106,000, with the final two days in May still to be posted. She stated the figure was running below the 2008 number and the anticipated fee increases would impact the number in the future.

With regard to Mortgage tax, Mrs. Vogel reported that the first four months of 2009 generated approximately \$573,000; however, she said, it was too early to determine if the projected figures for 2009 would be met.

Mr. Strainer noted that the median price range for home sales had decreased, and sales (pending) had increased, and he said he expected an overall increase in real estate sales as a result of the \$8,000 first time home buyers tax credit. He noted that Saratoga County reported a significant increase in real estate sales, which provided strong evidence of a subsequent rise in Warren County.

Addressing Agenda Item 4; Mrs. Vogel conveyed her understanding as an elected official in Warren County. She stated that she was experienced in matters regarding responsiveness to the constituency, and also the responsibilities as a Department Head which included budget management. She apprised that when county wide complaints are submitted to the County Clerk's Office, the Department Head must take responsibility for the negative feedback and alternatively, the staff received all positive feedback. She noted that the County Clerk's Office was responsible for the adherence to many government statutes and was accountable to State agencies. Further, she asserted, the services therein generated revenue for Warren County.

Regarding staff, Mrs. Vogel reported that in 1990 there were twenty total staff members and the same number was true for 2009. Pertaining to DMV Clerks, she stated that in 1990, the Department employed eight clerks, as compared to seven in 2009. She stated that of those seven clerk positions, five were currently filled, and two were vacant. Mr. Belden asked if the two vacant positions were funded in the budget and Mrs. Vogel responded affirmatively.

Mr. Kenny explained that the two vacancies were funded in the budget, and one was to be eliminated in the first round of budget reductions. He apprised that he had participated in a department survey several years ago which captured the traffic and overall effectiveness and productivity of the Department and subsequently, he said, staffing adjustments were made which resulted in the delivery of excellent service. He noted that the Washington County Clerk's Office had been praised for their efficient service when compared to Warren County. Mr. Kenny asserted that although he preferred to avoid a reduction in staff which reduced revenue for the County, it was necessary to eliminate positions in order to meet difficult budgetary goals. He stated that both positions could not be eliminated due to the amount of earned vacation and sick time in the Department.

Mrs. Vogel reported that from the period beginning May 11, 2009 and ending December 31, 2009 there were 162 working days, and 108 employee leave (vacation, personal, floating holiday) days were yet to be scheduled. She stated that the Department operated short of staff at present, and would be short for two thirds of the entire year.

Continuing, Mrs. Vogel apprised of two important items for this year; she said the eight year license renewals that were issued in 2001 would be coming due in large numbers and she said that the New York State DMV predicted an increase in license renewals from 2009 through 2012. She noted that New York State would realize the fee increases for Motor Vehicle transactions, with the 25% increase in license and registration fees to be effective September 1, 2009. Jody Ross, Deputy County Clerk, stated that some fee

increases would be effective in the summer of 2009 and fees for new registrations and renewals would increase in April 2010 and May 2010, respectively.

Responding to an inquiry from Mr. Belden, Mrs. Vogel said that higher fees would yield an increase in revenue as the County portion was based on a percentage. She cited that \$6.35 was the amount of revenue Warren County earned on a \$50 license. Mr. Strainer stated that the County could anticipate a steady increase with standardized fees and Mrs. Vogel cautioned that revenue would not be realized on business conducted by mail. Mr. Strainer added that he had observed waiting lines in the Washington County Office, and praised the Warren County Clerk for prompt service he had observed.

Pertaining to the analysis of the County Clerk's Office ten years ago, Mr. Kenny noted that the wait time for Westchester County at that time was six hours.

According to Mrs. Vogel, mail in renewals had always been a concern of the County Clerk, as they did not generate revenue. She stated that she expected to see a significant rise in revenue over the next several years as a result of the fee increases and the eight year license renewals.

Mr. Strainer asked how long the Department had been understaffed and Mrs. Vogel stated that a retirement in November 2008, followed by a termination in February 2009 due to the employees inability to master the position duties, had left the Department understaffed by two. She conveyed to the Committee that she would like to fill one position so that training could begin. The second position, she said, would be abolished and she asked the Committee to remain apprised of volume and revenue figures should consideration for restoration of the position be deemed necessary. Mr. Strainer raised the issue of part-time staff and Mrs. Vogel stated that she had one part-time employee for the summer. Further, she stated, part-time positions would not require an examination and had a basic and limited performance requirement which would not offer the necessary benefit to the Office. Responding to a question from Mr. Belden, Mrs. Vogel said that the civil service exam for the DMV Clerk position would be held in late-October.

Mr. Kenny asserted that the DMV would suffer during the summer months with the heavier use of employee vacation time and unfortunately, he said, an alternative was not available. Pertaining to efficiency and service, Mrs. Vogel stated that forms were readily available both inside and just outside the Office and a revised phone recording system had improved service and efficiency for callers. She asserted that customer service had always been the priority in the Office. Her staff, she said, concentrated on the customer at hand. Mr. Kenny pointed out that due to the complexity of some transactions, it was necessary for a customer to see two clerks at different windows for the completion of

some transactions.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request to fill the vacant position of Motor Vehicle License/Registration Clerk, base salary of \$26,558; and to abolish the remaining vacant position of Motor Vehicle License/Registration Clerk, base salary of \$26,558, as outlined above and to refer same to the Personnel Committee. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Geraghty inquired about the benefit of cross training and moving staff within the Department during peak volume periods, as was accomplished in many business environments. Mrs. Vogel apprised that such a strategy had been piloted several years ago and due to the broad range of titles and position levels, the trial had not been successful. Mr. Kenny summarized that when the strategy was implemented during the former analysis it was found that due to the complex nature of DMV training, which included mandated procedures, there was no time available for training.

Mr. Payne asked if the eight year license renewals could be completed by mail and Mr. Kenny stated that a vision exam would be required necessitating a visit to the DMV Office. Regarding the extensive paperwork required from automobile dealers, Mr. Payne asked if the Office could open one hour earlier to accommodate same. Mrs. Vogel apprised that there was a dealer window; however, she said, it was closed at certain times due to limited staff. Mr. Kenny reported that in the past dealers were given predetermined two hour slots to conduct business and it was found that the dealers could not operate within such limits and would proceed to Washington County for same.

Mrs. Ross apprised of the continuous workload generated by automobile dealers and she explained that packets were dropped off for processing for pick up later in the day. She stated that when the dealer returned to pick up the documents, they often indicated some as priority/rush items. Mr. Kenny noted the location of the Warren County DMV in proximity to many local dealerships which were equidistant to the Washington County Office.

As there was no further business to come before the County Clerk-DMV Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 10:09 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist